

Kyodan

News Letter

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RELATIONS WITH OVERSEAS CHURCHES IN THE NEW YEAR

I feel that the United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyodan) is on the verge of entering a new era in our relationships with churches overseas. It is becoming impossible to simply continue doing things the way we have in the past.

First, I would like to deal with our relationships with churches in Asia. At present our only official ties are limited to three churches in Korea and one in Taiwan. Our contacts in other places have not yet come to the point of being official church-to-church relations.

At the personal level a number of deep relationships are being developed. For example, the Women's Division of the Bd. of Missions of the United Methodist Church in the Philippines has been sending Mrs. Filomena Quisol as a missionary to Okinawa for the past 23 years. (We have finally taken notice of this act of love and reconciliation extended by those who were victims of the Pacific war to the country that inflicted the suffering.) In order to express appreciation for this and to foster future developments, I attended the 11th General Conference of the UMC in Manila last November. At that time I also had a meeting with a Bishop of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines which provided an opening for a mutual exchange. We will participate in the 6th Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia in Manila this May.

Among our overseas clergy we have Rev. MOCHIZUKI Kenichiro at the Thailand Theological Seminary in Chiangmai and last year we sent Rev. ARAKAWA Yoshihiro to work with the United Church of Ponape.

But the time has now come to move on from the stage of such individual contacts to the establishment of church-to-church relations on a more permanent basis.

Secondly, we are concerned about our exchange with churches in North America (JNAC/CoC). Taking into consideration the autonomy of the Kyodan and the economic progress of Japan, along with new policies and a tendency towards withdrawal of missionaries on the part of North American churches, we are now facing within the Kyodan the urgent necessity of reconsidering our own position. Although it would be difficult to establish long-range policies for the next 10 or 20 years, what we can and must do now is begin the task of reexamining the past and move on from there to consider new policies. At long last we have just begun this task.

Thirdly, we have also begun discussions with the WCC and European churches in a more responsible manner. We hope these discussions will bear fruit in the future.

Toda Iuke

TODA Iuke, Kyodan Moderator

NEW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETS

The new Executive Committee elected at the Kyodan's 19th General Assembly last November held its first meeting Jan. 11-12, 1977 in the Japan Christian Center. A question was raised at the start as to why there was no proposal from the Moderator, as there had been two years ago, to coopt participant observers. The ensuing debate resulted in a decision to coopt SAEKI Yoichiro (Tokyo District), OI Hisashi (Osaka District), KOIDE Shinobu (Holiness Group), and someone from Okinawa District yet to be chosen. The rationale for taking initiative in coopting participant observers, as established by the

previous Executive Committee in 1975, is recognition of the need to ensure a hearing for inadequately represented minority views.

An absentee among the elected members of the new Executive Committee was Rev. OMIYA Hiroshi (Tokyo) whose resignation was deferred to the next meeting to enable further efforts to persuade him to reconsider.

Several items on the long agenda were postponed to the next meeting, July 18-19, and several were referred to appropriate committees. Members of all Standing Commissions and Committees were elected smoothly,

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New Executive Committee Meets (continued)

thanks to hard work on the part of the nominating committee, except for the Joint Pastoral Seminar Committee which was felt by some to have had too little change in its membership over the years.

The longest time given to any one subject was three hours on the Council of Cooperation in the context of relations with overseas churches and with Christian institutions within Japan. Questions were raised about church responsibility toward educational missionaries and their place in the life of the Japanese Church. The staff was instructed to prepare a white paper on the requesting, re-

ceiving, and use of cooperative funds by the Kyodan over the past 30 years through CoC channels; and four Executive Committee members were appointed to collate the key questions related to the CoC and the Japan-North American Commission on Cooperative Mission (JNAC) in preparation for further discussion at the next meeting. Time is also to be set aside for discussion of responsibility for police intervention and court trials in relation to the Tokyo District Assembly meeting of 1971 and Tokyo Union Theological Seminary, with efforts to insure the participation of the persons most directly concerned in these incidents.

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OUR INHERITANCE FROM MORI ARIMASA

by SAKO Junichiro

Pastor of Naka Shibuya Church, Tokyo

MORI Arimasa was born in Shinjuku, Tokyo, on Nov. 30, 1911, as the first son of Rev. MORI Akira. MORI Arinori, who served as Minister of Education during the Meiji era, was his grandfather. From childhood he was influenced by the earnest Christian faith of both his parents and by his father's artistic nature. He received infant baptism from UEMURA Masahisa in Fujimicho Church, Tokyo, on Dec. 3, 1911. Uemura Masahisa and UCHIMURA Kanzo were among the Japanese thinkers who influenced him most. His book, "Uchimura Kanzo Ron" (The Thought of Uchimura Kanzo), written before he went to France, is remarkable for the way it reflects Uchimura's faith in the atonement of the cross of Jesus Christ while upholding the uniqueness of God expressed in the phrase, "God is One."

Mori's thinking developed under his father's tutelage and the strong influence of Uemura and Uchimura while he was a student at Tokyo University. He was an Assistant Professor there when, in 1950, he received a scholarship from the government of France to study at the Sorbonne. He remained in France, deepening his studies of DESCARTES and PASCAL, until his death on Oct. 18, 1976.

As a Professor at the University of Paris and Director of the Japan Center there, he taught Japanese language and culture to many generations of French students, always endeavoring to interpret Japanese thinking fully and accurately. It is not too much to say that the enthusiasm for Japanese

language and culture found among French students today is largely the result of Mori's efforts.

We cannot overlook the influence he has had on students here in Japan through the writing that has come out of his 25 years of living in France. His books of essays:-- "Babiron no Hotori nite" (By the Waters of Babylon), "Haruka naru Notoru Damu" (Notre Dame in the Distance), "Sabaku ni Mukatte" (Into the Desert), "Tabi no Sora no shita de" (Under the Skies of Travel) and "Kigi wa Hikari o Abite" (Trees in the Sunshine)-- have fostered a *Mori boom* among Japanese readers.

Neither can we neglect the Bach recitals of Mori Arimasa the organist. The musical nature of his meditations forms another facet of his unique thinking. He never failed to spend an hour at the organ each morning.

In his "Notre Dame in the Distance" he writes, "One thing is certain: 25 years with Notre Dame in the background have decisively turned my thoughts inward. At the same time they have forced me to express myself."

And our hopes have been drawn by the thoughts expressed by Mori out of those 25 years. His death seemed to end those hopes, but I have faith that the precious heritage of his thought will be preserved by the youth of Japan and the West and bear rich fruit in the future.

MORI Arimasa may not be known to all our readers. He was an outstanding Japanese philosopher who died recently in Paris at the age of 64.

SEIREIEN NOW FIVE YEARS OLD

by Lawrence Thompson

Seireien, an accredited nursing home for the elderly in Hiroshima, a project originally authorized by the Kyodan General Assembly in 1968, has this past September marked its fifth anniversary of outstanding service. Seireien was from the very first recognized locally and by Kyodan churches throughout Japan as having a special ministry to A-bomb survivors. It was also one of the early accredited nursing facilities of its kind. There are now 23 such institutions in Hiroshima.

The 50-bed facility was completed in the late summer of 1971. EBIE Norio, the young but eminently qualified new director brought to the work a strong Christian faith, an early commitment to the peace movement, a master's degree in social work and some four years experience on the staff of Hiroshima Christian Social Center. In September, 1971, 600 persons gathered for a public service of thanksgiving held under the direction of the then Kyodan Moderator YOSHIDA Mitsuho at the Chapel of Hiroshima Jogakuin High School. This was followed by dedication ceremonies at the new facility. The first residents were welcomed on Oct. 4, 1971. The full complement of 50 residents was surpassed by December and has remained at approximately 54 persons to the present day. In keeping with the founding purpose of the project, between 15 and 20 of these residents have, over the years, continued to be A-bomb survivors.

The five years which have followed have not been without problems. Seireien has shared with other welfare agencies throughout Japan the difficulty of making ends meet in an inflationary economy where government subsidy lags six to eight months behind economic conditions. Private contributions through the Seireien Support Association have continued to make it possible to provide staff beyond minimum standards and purchase needed extra equipment. In addition to financial difficulties there have also been a number of complex personnel problems.

Through all these difficulties, Seireien has laid great emphasis on enriching the daily life experience of the individuals who call Seireien their home. Daily morning worship services, for instance, started out the first year with an average attendance of 16 residents. Today this program has developed into a comprehensive morning program, including spiritual, educational, rehabilitative and recreational content. At least one program each week is planned by the residents themselves. Average par-

ticipation now stands at 45 persons, nearly all the residents.

A careful program of collecting on tape and in written form the war time experience of all residents, especially the A-bomb survivors, has been instituted. There is a small but growing library of materials on the A-bomb and war experience which includes these personal records.

A nationally known group worker has recently concluded two years at the home developing a variety of small group activities especially tailored to the needs of these individuals. An impressive list of annual special events has developed at the home, many of which are carried out with the assistance of volunteer help. A residents' publication called "Hara Ogusa" is published periodically and includes pictures and reports on activities as well as memories of the residents. Equipment improvements, such as an elevator, rehabilitation room, ramps, and an outdoor wheelchair course, tend to emphasize increased mobility and expanded life environment for the residents.

For the fifth anniversary of the home, residents raised money themselves for a curtain for the small stage at one end of their recreation room. Meanwhile a group of residents, under the direction of a volunteer instructor, constructed a large tile mosaic depicting the folk tale "Hana Saka Jiisan." The mosaic is now prominently displayed with great pride near the main entrance.

The experience of Seireien and its residents reaches far beyond the home itself. The 1975 annual report indicates that four professional staff members, a group worker, a caseworker, a nurse and a dietitian were active during the year in reporting to local and national groups on studies and experiences at the home. The Director has given at least 16 lectures during the year and contributed to a number of publications.

Seireien no longer anticipates expanding to a 100 bed facility, one of its original goals. Rather, in spite of the financial difficulties in operating at the lower resident level, the management is dedicated to personalized service with high professional standards. Management by the Nishi Chugoku Christian Social Work Welfare Corporation gives the operation a relation with local churches and wider church structures which is certainly unusual, if not unique, among Christian circles in Japan today. In short, at the still tender age of five years, Seireien is a project of which the Kyodan may well be proud.

“ともにうたおう”

*Let's Sing Together
50 New Hymns*

A new and experimental collection of 50 ecumenical hymns was made public at a dedication ceremony on Dec. 1, 1976, held in the AVACO-wing of the Japan Christian Center. Entitled Tomo ni Utao (Let's Sing Together), the new hymnal is the result of efforts made by an ecumenical committee established under the auspices of the Hymnal Committee of the Kyodan Board of Publications as one means of commemorating the Centennial Celebration of the first Japanese Hymnal which was compiled in 1874.

It was thought appropriate to begin an exploration of the possibility of developing an ecumenical hymnal which would contain new songs based upon contemporary faith. To aid in this task, members were solicited outside the Kyodan from the Japan Catholic Church, the Japan Anglican Episcopal Church, and the National Christian Council of Japan. Present denominational hymnals were compared, new hymns were solicited, and some were commissioned.

The final selection of 50 songs includes 24 hymns having words and music composed by Japanese. Several have words by Protestant poets with music by Catholic or Orthodox composers. One group of hymn tunes is set to waka in the traditional Japanese meter of 5-7-5-7-7, including some by the late KAGAWA Toyohiko. A number of new Japanese language contemporary chants from the post-Vatican II selection of Catholic Liturgical Hymns can also be found in the Japanese section.

The rest of the songs come from a variety of sources, such as one of Bonhoeffer's last poems set to an American folk tune, a Pete Seeger Ballad with guitar accompaniment, and an Israeli folk song.

Several of the new hymns were sung together at the dedication ceremony, sparking off a "sing together" movement being planned by ecumenical regional committees throughout Japan. The first such gathering was held on Jan. 16, 1977, at the Tokyo Yamate Church where over half of the new hymns were introduced by ecumenical choirs and congregational singing, giving visible witness to the closing refrain of Hymn No. 1, "The Church of the Lord is One."

TOKYO TAIWAN CHURCH DEDICATION

The Tokyo Taiwan Church used its new building for the first time at a Christmas service, Dec. 26, 1976. The formal dedication, Jan. 23, will include a sermon by Rev. SAEKI Yukio. Moderator of Tokyo's western sub-district. The Taiwan Church congregation, which has been meeting in borrowed quarters for several years and was formally recognized as a Kyodan member church in 1975, is now glad to be settled in its own building at last. The address is: 25-11 Minami Ogikubo 4-chome, Suginami-ku, Tokyo, 167, Japan (Tel. 331-3247). The average attendance is about 120 and the membership role has reached 91. Worship is in the Taiwan language. The minister is TSAI Yi Hsin, a graduate of Tainan Theological College, who sees for the church an active and important role amidst a minority group of about 24,000 living in Japan without diplomatic representation.

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Correction:

Apologies to Ms OZAKI Keiko, artist for Christmas issue (No. 108-109), for listing her school as being in Kita-Kyushu City. Seinan Gakuin Univ. is in Fukuoka City.

We have just heard about "A Centennial Legacy -- Japanese Christian Mission in North America 1877-1977," a Japanese Christian 100th Anniversary History Project. Produced by the 100th Anniversary Committee, this book has over 350 pages of history and pictorial illustrations on Christian Work among Japanese in N.A., and related articles on regional histories, relocation centers, and post-war rehabilitation.

Pre-Publication Price: \$15.00. (Regular Price after Feb. 15, 1977: \$20.00)
Make Checks Payable to NCJCCF CENTRAL COMMITTEE, 5 CHERRY COURT, WATSONVILLE, CA. 95076.

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